

**REMARKS / ARGUMENTS**

The action by the Examiner in this application, together with the references cited by him, have been given careful consideration. Following such consideration, claims 7 and 9 have been canceled, and new claims 10, 11 and 12 have been added to define more clearly the patentable invention Applicant believes is disclosed herein.

It is respectfully requested that the Examiner reconsider the claims in their present form, together with the following comments, and allow the application.

The Examiner has rejected the previously allowed claim 7 as being unpatentable in view of U.S. Patent 837,103 to Nonnemacher in view of U.S. Patent No. 348,871 to Wales. In view of the Examiner's rejection, new claim 10 has been added. New claim 10 eliminates reference to "first and second connection means," and sets forth various elements of the buckle and structural terms rather than nonfunctional terms. Moreover, some of the features of the grip portion of the buckle have been incorporated into the independent claim. Specifically, the two enclosed, elongated slots 24, 26 in the main body portion have been more specifically defined. In this respect, claim 10 defines the main body portion as having a first rectilinear elongate closed-ended slot and a second elongate closed-ended slot. The second elongate slot is defined as being "bent at an angle at its center point so as to form a substantially flattened V-shape." The two elongate slots extend laterally of the buckle and are disposed and spaced-apart, in substantially parallel relationship wherein the respective ends of the slots are equidistant.

It is respectfully submitted that the Nonnemacher and Wales references do not teach, suggest or show a main body portion having two side-by-side elongate slots wherein one of the slots has a flattened V configuration, and the respective ends of the slots are equally distant from each other. In

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this respect, in the Wales reference, the slot that the Examiner contends is a flattened V-shape is not a closed-ended slot contained within a body portion, and the slot in Wales is not substantially parallel to another slot wherein the respective ends of the slots are equidistant.

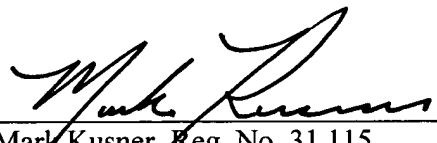
It is respectfully submitted that the claims in their present form are distinguishable from the prior art, and therefore favorable action is therefore respectfully requested.

If there are any fees necessitated by the foregoing communication, please charge such fees to our Deposit Account No. 50-0537, referencing our Docket No. TK8778US.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: February 16, 2006

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I hereby certify that this correspondence (along with any paper referenced as being attached or enclosed) is being deposited on the below date with the United States Postal Service with sufficient postage as first class mail in an envelope addressed to MAIL STOP AMENDMENT, Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450.

Date: February 16, 2006

  
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Christine Goellner